



City of Madison News Release

For Immediate Release:

Mar 6, 2013

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Informational Website Link:

www.publichealthmdc.com/publications/documents/Madison-DaneTobaccoReport2012.pdf,
www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental/tobacco/

Jump in Illegal Tobacco Sales to Kids for Second Year

Four Years of Progress Reversed in Last 2 Years

Every year at this time, Public Health Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) issues a report on tobacco sales to underage youth. Four years of steady declines in the rate of these illegal sales ended in 2011 with a dramatic and disturbing increase reported. That trend did not improve in 2012.

In 2011, retail outlets in the City of Madison saw underage tobacco sales at a rate of 16.9%. In 2012, this rate was virtually unchanged at 15.4%. The county rate in 2011 was 7.7%, which rose to 10.4% in 2012, a significant and disturbing increase. This information is gathered by means of compliance checks that are carried out by trained teams of young people between the ages of 16 and 17 under the supervision of PHMDC staff. The check consists of an underage team member attempting to purchase a tobacco product.

This team carried out 232 compliance checks in Madison and Dane County. In 2012, on a county-wide basis, these young people were successful in buying tobacco almost 13 percent of the time.

Store employees are required to request and check the identification of young people attempting to purchase tobacco products. If the clerk refuses to sell tobacco to one of our youth team members, a PHMDC staff member will come in and provide the clerk with a thank you card. If the young person is successful in making the purchase, the staff member will come in and inform the clerk that a citation will be issued to the clerk and the business owner (license holder) within a week. The citations are issued in accordance with Wisconsin statutes.

According to Lyle Burmeister, PHMDC's Tobacco Control Youth Coordinator, "The disturbing fact underlying these results is that 80 percent of all smokers start smoking before age 18. We also know that tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the US. Education and enforcement of these laws is no small matter. The more we can do, the more we can help make sure that the young people of Wisconsin do not become replacements for the 1,200 tobacco customers in the US who die every day due to the devastating health effects of tobacco."

The Wisconsin WINS-the Wisconsin tobacco prevention and control program-was created in 2002 to comply with federal mandates designed to reduce the number of tobacco sales to minors. When the program began in 2002, tobacco sales to minors represented 33 percent of total tobacco sales in Wisconsin.

Burmeister concluded "Retail clerks are on the front line in preventing young people from getting access to tobacco products, because when minors have a harder time getting tobacco products, they are less likely to become lifetime tobacco addicts."

According to recent estimates, tobacco companies spend \$8.5 billion per year to market their products nationwide. In Wisconsin alone, they spend \$133.7 million per year. Despite industry denials, much of this advertising targets youth, as evidenced by the multitude of new, candy-flavored and candy disguised tobacco products that have entered the market. In fiscal year 2012, Wisconsin received \$653 million in revenue from the taxes on cigarettes and tobacco products. Less than one percent of that amount actually went to tobacco prevention programs.

For more information on tobacco control efforts, check the PHMDC website at

www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental/tobacco/.

A copy of the complete 2012 report is available at:

www.publichealthmdc.com/publications/documents/Madison-DaneTobaccoReport2012.pdf

For information on the Wisconsin WINS program, see
www.wiwins.org/.

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